



January 2025

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SPEED LIMIT PLEA

Concern over the rising toll of accidents on Lamb Lane has led to Firbeck Parish Council urging the highway authority to consider imposing a reduced speed limit on the unrestricted road.

Speed appears to have been a recurring factor in a spate of crashes before and after the Christmas period. One of the most serious incidents involved two cars colliding near the junction with Ramper Road and ploughing into fields on opposite sides of Lamb Lane.

The road was closed for some time, and the air ambulance was called to the scene.

Heading towards Throapham the bends by the junction with Penny Lane have become a notorious blackspot in recent times with vehicles leaving the carriageway on a regular basis.

Firbeck PC would like to see Rotherham MBC imposing a limit “at the very least” from the Penny Lane junction to the junction with Kidd Lane.

Meanwhile, a traffic survey carried out before Christmas has identified that some 63 per cent of vehicles were already breaking the 30 mph speed limit as they travelled north out of Firbeck towards the A634. Some 47 per cent of drivers were exceeding the limit travelling towards the village near the entrance to Firbeck Hall. The findings were due to be discussed at the next council meeting.

LETWELL STREET FAYRE



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It might be deep winter, but villagers at Letwell are already making plans for next summer's street fayre. Nord Vindr, a Viking re-enactment group, will be taking a starring role. Rotherham youth orchestra have been lined up to take charge of the music programme for the afternoon.

The fayre this year will be staged on the afternoon of Saturday July the 5th. Fingers crossed for sunshine!!

BUSY TIMES AT FIRBECK VH

Firbeck Village Hall Committee have had a busy few months! In November we were pleased to welcome the band 'Track Dogs', a talented group of singers and musicians, who delighted the sell-out audience with their original tracks and musical skills. This year's Christmas Fair was our most successful yet, raising a fantastic £1332. Once again Father Christmas and his trusty Elf stole the show with the children, whilst others browsed the quality hand-made gifts and produce, joined in games and carol singing and enjoyed scrumptious hot roast pork sandwiches and mulled wine. Cinema buffs were also treated to two great films – 'A Haunting in Venice' in November, and our Christmas offering 'Last Christmas', where participants enjoyed mince pies and festive gingerbread. A Christmas party, attended by 70 people, between Christmas and New Year, completed a successful year of fund-raising events at the hall.

As 2025 gets underway, we have two musical events at Firbeck Village Hall – Jack Harper and his Band will return on Saturday 25th January, and we are pleased to welcome Kat Eaton and Nick Atkinson for an acoustic performance, with audience participation, on Friday 21st February. Further details and booking information can be found on our website at firbeckvillagehall.co.uk. If you are interested in our future Cinema Nights, subscribe to our website at to obtain reminders and details of the films to be shown. Admission is free and all are welcome.



CHRISTMAS AT FIRBECK

CAROL SERVICE AT ST. PETER'S

Letwell's annual Carol Service at St. Peter's Church took place on December 17th, with a slight twist on its format.

Although a number of regular attendees were absent due to diary clashes, and some villagers may have been confused about the starting time, more than 20 worshippers enjoyed the service.

In a small break with tradition, Church Warden Nicky Blyth used words composed by Nick

Fawcett to replace the usual Lessons with modern descriptions of the events in Bethlehem on that night of major significance for the world.

Interspersed between the carols was a narration by ‘The Holy Star’ about what could be seen from high above , along with ‘The Innkeeper’s’ version of his hosting dilemma and further contributions from the bewildered Magi and shepherds.

The event was followed by a return to the tradition of rounding off the evening with mince pies and mulled wine.

UPDATE FROM LETWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Firstly, a very happy new year to all of the communities that FLAG represents. I have been reflecting on the fantastic community of Letwell. The generosity shown in December was humbling. Our village hall is a great facility but relies heavily on our village lottery, hire fees and donations and in December we received some very generous donations from Letwell Community Group and the Quilting group which will be used to run and improve the hall throughout the year. Thanks also to Letwell Music who held another successful event in December adding to the viability of this lovely building and village facility. If you are looking for a facility that is very reasonably priced to hold either a one off or regular event, please visit our website for more information. www.letwellvillage.org.uk.

Martyn and Janice Sharpe have for years managed the hiring of the hall and as times move on and we move on-line, they will no longer be doing so. I'd like to thank them both for their dedication over the last 40 + years in helping to manage the Hall. Additionally, Martyn has stepped back from collecting for the village lottery, as we move on-line with our payments, and I'd also like to thank him for that. They have both been very active in our community over the years and we hope they will continue to be in a different way going forward.

The generosity of our community was also shown in December with the donation of a new Union Flag, thanks to Geoff and Lesley for this.

We held a Christmas Party which was kindly organised by Letwell Community Group and we came together as a community with a brass band to eat, drink and sing Christmas carols. This raised over £200 for the village hall and was enjoyed by all who attended.

Looking forward, I'm excited to work with my fellow councillors and new Clerk to continue to improve our community. We have a few key initiatives we are going to be working on this year, but if there is anything in particular you want us to address, please either attend our next council meeting held in the Village Hall at 7pm on Thursday 23rd January or email Yvonne, our Clerk at clerk@letwell-pc.gov.uk

Thanks for reading, and I wish you all a very prosperous 2025.

Amanda Wood

Chair, Letwell Parish Council

LINDISFARNE STAR AT LETWELL

Ex Lindisfarne legend Marty Craggs is making a much-anticipated return to Letwell with his band next month for a night of classic songs from across the decades spanning popular music, Celtic folkand a twist of Geordie anthems.

Famous for classic numbers such as Meet Me On The Corner, Run For Home, Fog on the Tyne and Lady Eleanor, the talented multi instrumentalist plays sax, accordion, tin whistle, harmonica, bodhran and flute - and sings lead vocals as well. Sounds breath taking, and it is too!!

It's more than five years since Marty last graced the stage at the village hall - five years too long!! - and tickets are already flying off the shelf. So if you're interested don't leave it too long to book.

The show is booked for Saturday February 22nd with tickets - inevitably slightly more expensive than usual - on sale at £17.50p available from martyndsharpe@aol.com phone 07909 960 422 or 01909 731626.

Doors open at 8 pm and music at 8.30 pm.

John Reilly and Lewis Nitikman play the hall on Saturday March 29th with an evening full of Elton John and Billy Joel classics.

They've taken the show all over Britain in the last year or so, and its played to rave reviews from Chelsea in the south to Northumberland in the north..

NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH CIOUNCIL

Happy New Year to you from us all on the Parish Council in Firbeck.

Christmas celebrations in Firbeck this year were hugely enjoyable and very well supported, often in the face of some dreadful weather conditions. We were delighted to see our Advent Sunday Christmas tree event attracting more residents than ever before. As ever, we are hugely grateful to the team of volunteers that help us with erecting trees, (large and small), decorating them, organising the carols in church and the refreshments in the village hall. And of course - thanks to Santa and his team for making time to visit us!

Road safety issues are at the forefront of our concerns at the moment and so this will be the focus of this article.

Parking

We have a problem in the village with pavement parking. A number of our residents

depend on some kind of assistance to make their way through the village as pedestrians and to access the village facilities. Progress is made difficult, if not impossible, by vehicles being parked on the pavement leaving no space for assisted pedestrian passage on the path. This leaves some having to travel along the road in wheelchairs (which are not intended for road use) putting themselves at some considerable risk. On occasion even that option is not available because cars have been parked on kerb ‘drop downs’ meaning there is no way of mounting or de mounting the kerb.

This is an issue that can easily be rectified - put simply - when parking please have regard to pavement users and keep your vehicle on the road - where it belongs. If we cannot resolve this issue, our only option will be to have double yellow lines at key points which we feel sure no one would really like to see.

We are also seeing some parking on the grass verges on Kidd Lane which is hazardous for other road users and also leaves deep ruts in the verge making walking on them impossible. This means once again, pedestrians have no option but to walk in the road.

Remember - Pavements are for people, roads are for cars. Grass verges are part of our rural scene, not parking spaces. Please park with consideration for pedestrians.

Speeding and speed limits

We had a further traffic survey undertaken before Christmas to help us build a picture of the extent to which traffic through the village is increasing and the speeds at which vehicles are travelling. The survey was carried out near the entrance to Firbeck Hall within the 30mph zone. At that point the survey results tell us that 63% of vehicles were already exceeding the speed limit as they travelled north towards the A634 and 47% as they travelled south towards the village. Vehicle movements at the weekend are 30% of weekday traffic. These results will be discussed at our next council meeting.

Over the Christmas period there were a number of accidents on Lamb Lane and we are urging the local authority to consider imposing a reduced speed limit on this busy road - at the very least along the stretch including the junctions of Kidd Lane and Penny Hill where we have seen some serious crashes.

Progress on the Neighbourhood Plan

The working group is busy building up a picture of the village and its environs and gathering information to inform the drafting of a plan. The group reports to the Parish Council at our meetings so do come along to hear what is going on and what stage of the process has been reached.

Our next parish council meeting is on Wednesday 22nd January in the village hall at 7pm.

Caroline Jopling

NATURE REPORT FROM DAVID WRIGHT

A few years ago, a Firbeck resident reported an otter sighting on Lamb Lane Dyke, which I mentioned in FLAG. For some time now, residents of Kingswood Close have been aware of night time visits along the dyke by an otter or otters. However, on 6th December some of us were astonished and delighted with the lunchtime presence of an otter in our back gardens. We're privileged to have such a creature grace our gardens. However, although delightful, otters are wild animals with a powerful bite and shouldn't be approached in any circumstances. They can be aggressive to pets.

Another mega find in November was a water rail on the dyke, the first I've seen in Firbeck. They're not a rare bird, but skulking and very hard to see.

In October a Firbeck resident encountered a friendly grey wagtail that took to pecking at her windows. One day when she was dusting, it followed her from room to room, pecking away! It's a regular visitor. A possibility is that it's pecking at its reflection which it thinks is another bird.

We had another female wheatear on the airfield in early October on its journey back to Africa for the winter. Two female goshawks appeared on the airfield in late October and are probably here for the winter: female goshawks are large birds of prey, but males are much smaller. A small flock of golden plover showed nicely on the airfield in late November.

Two Firbeck residents were surprised to see a female smooth newt cross New Road on 30th October. One of them also observed a short-eared owl at the junction of Lamb Lane and Ramper Road in late October – probably newly arrived for the winter from Iceland, Russia or Scandinavia. Another Firbeck resident enjoyed a Christmas Eve treat with a barn owl sighting in Letwell. I observed two peregrines on Leys Lane in late November.

The breeding season starts in February with hares kicking off the action followed by ground-nesting lapwings in March, skylarks in April and hopefully yellow wagtails in May. And



WATER RAIL

we mustn't forget our ground-nesting game birds - pheasants and partridges nesting in April and May. It's very important, therefore, that dogs are kept to the paths during the breeding season. Small creatures such as leverets are easily killed and birds will desert their nests if disturbed by dogs.

A new report indicates that the UK needs more hedgerows to support a wide

range of wildlife including Red-Listed birds such as the yellowhammer. The government encouraged hedgerow removal after the Second World War to increase food production. Defra aims to restore 30,000 miles of hedgerow by 2037 and 45,000 miles by 2050, but the Climate Change Committee believes that isn't enough.

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LETWELL'S FUNNIEST HALLOWEEN STUNT EVER

Twelve year old Letwell boy Oliver Bell tells how he went walkabout with his brother's head on a plate....

“This year we wanted to make a really good Halloween costume and I'd say we did. At first, we started to think. Then the idea. My little brother's head on a plate. We wanted for people to laugh at it and to find it funny (also to get more treats).

“It took a few days to complete the costume – with a couple of difficulties along the way. One of these was getting the wine glass to stick to the table. So much glue and tape went onto that thing before it stuck, and even when it did, we were still very conscious about it. Another was the cloche over his head. Second time's the charm in our case!

“We spent days on the first one just for it to fall apart. Every door we came to, my brother just barged through, no-one could get to the sweets! He found it hard to be lugging around the ginormous box for hours and found the spaghetti around his neck (it was real) quite uncomfortable as it kept falling through the box and down his top!

“We got a lot of laughs and very funny reactions at some houses and there was fake blood splashed all over the table and chef to add to the effect. It was a lot of fun and we got so much food! Best.Halloween. Ever!!”



HONOUR FOR FIRBECK'S VALERIE

Nestled in a corner of the courtyard at Burlington House, Picadilly lies the home of The Linnean Society of London, the oldest learned society devoted to the science of natural history.

The Society, which was founded in 1788 by the botanist Edward Smith, holds a number of collections including those of the Swedish naturalist, Carl Linnaeus who formalised binomial nomenclature, so that every animal and plant is given a name consisting of just two Latin words to describe its genus and species.

In June 2024, Firbeck resident, Valerie Oxley was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London, an honour of which she is justly proud. Valerie has been interested in natural history all her life, from creating a nature museum in a garden shed as a young child to becoming President of the Institute for Analytical Plant Illustration and Chair of the Florilegium Society at Sheffield Botanical Gardens. A career teaching botanical illustration in the Lifelong Learning Department at the University of Sheffield and at various Adult Education Colleges, led to courses at botanical gardens in Cambridge, Sheffield and Edinburgh and abroad in France, La Palma and Sri Lanka.



An invitation to write a book for the Crowood Press led to the publication of 'Botanical Illustration' now considered a standard work for the subject. This was followed more recently by 'A Florilegium – Sheffield's Hidden Garden' with over 100 drawings of plants in Sheffield Botanical Gardens by members of the Florilegium Society, supported by botanical information and the collecting history of each plant. An earlier book 'The Wild Flowers of the Peak District' was published in 2000 in collaboration with botanist Dr Patrick Harding. These three books are held in the library at The Linnean Society of London.

Valerie told FLAG that an interest in all aspects of natural history is a joy that lasts a lifetime, there is always something new to discover.

VALERIE'S ILLUSTRATION OF
HELIANTHUS MOLLIS

LETWELL RESIDENT AND RETIRED FARMER GEOFF OFFERS HIS VIEW ON COUNTRYSIDE MATTERS

Viewing the world below from a holiday jet as we prepare to land at Leeds Bradford airport gives me chance to admire the Great British countryside and farming activities from above. It's also a good way of putting the thought of coming to contact with tarmac at around 170 mph out of my mind. There's no doubt that Britain, whether viewed from above or ground level, has the most beautiful countryside in the world.

The beauty didn't just happen on its own. The whole thing is man made. People often say we should we thank God for nature's beauty. Well maybe, but the farmers and the landowners are the people that gave and give you what we call the countryside. The countryside around our area is dominated by arable farming so the fields around and about are somewhat larger than the livestock areas. This is progress. Some people moan about it, but modern technology needs space and you need food, preferably British food.

Walking on the local footpaths you soon realise that the countryside around is well cared for. Ditches are cleared, grass margins and footpaths are cut and hedges are trimmed. How the farmers do all this free of charge and keep the locals happy I've no idea. There's plenty of woodland for the wildlife and the game cover provides food and shelter for more than the local pheasants.

Around the time of the late spring/early summer a few yellow signs appeared at the side of the road on roundabouts and even on a local council estate declaring that grass cutting on verges - the bit of the countryside the local council control - was being suspended to save a rare wild flower few of us had ever realised existed!!

How on earth this natural thing of beauty goes undetected on the miles of footpaths, grass paddocks like ours and open spaces I'll never know. Perhaps it's favoured habitat is land polluted with salt spray, diesel emissions, plastic bottles, crisp packets and discarded takeaway wrappings. Who knows...but the result was overgrown verges that besides growing invasive weeds, tall grass and rare orchids, not only looked a mess, but started to look a danger.

Lamb Lane is the local answer to the Nurburgring race-track. Pulling out of Kidd Lane and Ramper Road is tricky at the best of times. Trying to pull out while peering through the jungle of grass, weeds and rare orchids was downright dangerous. Obviously the green lobby at the council outrank their health and safety dept. so nothing got done till the local farmers cut the said mess and hedge so that drivers could pull out onto the raceway a little more safely, all free of charge, a selfless act from the custodians of the countryside. Thanks!!

Some years ago the good people of Letwell decided to line the Ramper with trees. We all like an avenue of trees to walk or drive down. It's a thing of beauty. An expert was consulted, trees bought and planted, and things, let's say, went a bit wrong. Had the locals consulted a local expert, let's say a farmer, he would either have pointed them in the right direction for

the variety of tree or perhaps suggested it looked rather nice as it was complete with free maintenance.

What we have now is an overgrown hedge with dying trees in front of it. Sometimes the countryside is best left to the ones who work, live and maintain and built it over the centuries. Surprisingly they know what they are doing.

Go out and enjoy it - it's free and is the most beautiful country in the world.

DATE FOR THE FIRBECK CHALLENGE

The 12 hour challenge for charity is back in 2025 for its 3rd year!

Save the date Saturday 17th May.

The event is being held at Firbeck Village Hall as usual, using last years walking/running and cycling route.

Come down within the hours of 8am to 8pm and challenge yourself to walk, run or cycle what you can and raise money for the British Heart Foundation.

Entry fee for the event is £12 which will include a pie and pea supper at the end of your challenge.

For more information and entry email les.crownshaw@gmail.com

DOUBLE DRAMA

It's been an eventful few weeks at FLAG headquarters.

We arrived back from a five hour journey from Scotland to find the bathroom floor slowly filling up with water.

We couldn't turn off the stop tap at first, but Yorkshire Water came out quickly to save the day - but not the expensive new wool carpet.

The plumber turned up the next day to investigate and discovered that a pesky mouse was to blame. Goodness knows why, but the rodent had chewed through a thick plastic pipe beneath the skirting board causing a massive leak. The plumber saw the funny side of it. "I'd loved to have been there," he joked, "when the water burst through the hole in the pipe and swept the mouse away."

The pipe remains a keepsake. If you look closely you can actually pick out the teeth marks engraved in the plastic!!

If that wasn't bad enough there was more drama on the night of December 29th.

With our 12 year old grandson running a temperature an old thermometer was produced to take his temperature.

As the thermometer was pulled out of its glass case it seemed to fall apart, and hundreds and hundreds of tiny white balls flew everywhere, all over the settee, carpet and our daughter in law,

A quick check online revealed that the balls were mercury, and highly toxic. Our natural instinct was to reach for the Hoover, but the internet warned this was the last thing you

should do.

It recommended closing off the affected room, and calling for urgent specialist help.

Well, we did just that, and two men in Hazmat suits and bearing sophisticated cleaning equipment arrived from Kent - yes, Kent!! - four hours later. By then it was 10 o'clock at night.

The bill was an eye watering £2,220 including VAT. Needless to say the insurance company are taking their time to consider the matter.

It's worth noting that mercury filled thermometers were taken off the shelves in 2012.

RISING STAR AGED 11

Ivy Lodge resident Gail Evans's grand-daughter has become something of an equestrian star at the age of 11. Caitlin has tasted success twice in recent times - coming 5th out of a field of 35 at the prestigious Royal International Horse Show in London and winning a regional dressage competition outright.

Caitlin and her four legged friend Cruz were out and about at Letwell over the Christmas period - with the horse suitably decked out in tinsel and Caitlin wearing a Santa cloak.



CABARET NIGHT

LETWELL CABARET NIGHT IN THE VILLAGE HALL
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND.....SAVE THE DATE.....

SATURDAY 8TH MARCH 7:30PM. £15 pp.

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LIVE MUSIC, FOOD AND DANCING.

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW. KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR POSTERS.

For further information, please contact Letwell Community Group Letwellcg@gmail.com

GALLY KNIGHT POET WILLIAM ADDISON CELEBRATES THE INSTALLATION OF HIS NEW HAND-MADE BENCH AT SALT HILL

When out with the dogs, or just taking a stroll,
It's often the case that your legs take their toll!
So, creating a place to take a rest
Became a task of "Where would be best?"

Salt Hill seemed to be fair-
Somewhere to stop and take in the air.
So, a fallen tree supplied the two legs.
A solid plank was then fitted with pegs.

And there, for some years, it stood,
Until the rot got into the wood.
Tarred timber from a telegraph pole
Replaced the legs; to make it whole.

Now, which ever way you face,
Enjoy your rest, at a slower pace.

William



WILLIAM'S BENCH TAKES PRIDE OF PLACE